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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE
RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 221st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 7 May 1996, at 3 p.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan)

Chairman: Mr. KA (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

2. Mr. AMARI (Tunisia) nominated Mr. Ka (Senegal) for the office of Chairman, Mr. Farhadi (Afghanistan) and Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) for re-election to the Office of Vice-Chairman, and Mr. Cassar (Malta) for re-election to the Office of Rapporteur.

3. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN said that if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to elect as officers the candidates nominated by the representative of Tunisia.

4. It was so decided.

5. Mr. Ka (Senegal) took the Chair.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

6. The CHAIRMAN said that greater determination and vigilance were currently required to ensure that the Palestinian people would one day exercise their inalienable rights and that a just and lasting peace would be established in the Middle East. In strengthening the actions of the United Nations on behalf of the economic and social development of Palestinian territories, the Secretary-General had made an inestimable contribution to the consolidation of peace. A major seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people was to be held in Cairo within a few days. President Arafat's recent visit to the United States of America and his appearance at the United Nations illustrated the importance of that seminar and all other initiatives aimed at helping the Palestinian people rehabilitate its infrastructure and enhance its national capabilities. The Committee would work closely with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to strengthen its working relations with all United Nations bodies, Member States and non-governmental organizations concerned with the Palestinian question.

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE FOR 1996 (A/AC.183/1996/CRP.1)

7. Mr. CASSAR (Malta), Rapporteur, introduced the draft programme of work of the Committee for 1996 (A/AC.183/1996/CRP.1), which the officers had drawn up after giving considerable thought to the contribution to be made by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights at the current stage of the ongoing peace process towards the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

8. Paragraphs 1 to 6 of the draft programme summarized the mandates given by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session to the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information. Paragraphs 7 to 11

outlined the priority issues for 1996, namely, efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the effective implementation of the agreements reached between the parties, and the mobilization of international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period. Paragraphs 12 to 16 dealt with the proposed activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights. It was recommended, among other things, that the Committee should continue to monitor the situation on the ground and draw urgent developments to the attention of the international community. It should also continue to participate in important international meetings, as necessary, and undertake a number of new activities to expand contacts with the Palestinian Authority and other institutions, including non-governmental organizations, in the areas under its jurisdiction.

9. Paragraphs 17 to 20 dealt in detail with the programme of seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations, and indicated a number of adjustments to be made to that programme. Paragraphs 21 to 28 dealt with research, monitoring and publications, including the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL). In that area, the Committee would continue to attach importance to the contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights as a centre for research, monitoring, the preparation of studies and the collection and dissemination of information on all issues related to the question of Palestine. It also requested the Division to continue its programme of publications and to develop UNISPAL further, in consultation with the Committee. With regard to the request contained in paragraph 28, the Division had established a public access replica and was studying various alternatives for posting documents on the Internet. However, the availability of the necessary resources for the further development of UNISPAL remained a concern.

10. Paragraphs 29 and 30 related to the observance in 1996 of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. A special programme was planned which would include an exhibit to be displayed at United Nations Headquarters from 29 November to 5 December 1996.

11. As it might sometimes be necessary for certain issues to be considered by the Committee's open-ended Working Group, he proposed that the Working Group should be re-established in accordance with past practice.

12. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft programme of work of the Committee for 1996 and that, on the basis of the recommendation of the Rapporteur, it wished to re-establish the open-ended Working Group.

13. It was so decided.

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14. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the provisional programme contained in working paper No. 1 and said he would take it that the Committee wished to approve it.

15. It was so decided.

16. Mr. ABDERAHMAN (Observer for Egypt) said that the convening of such an important seminar, and the fact that it would deal with questions pertaining to the development of the Palestinian economy, was a testimony to the Committee's vital role in helping to mobilize assistance for the Palestinian people during the transition to national independence and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. The fact that the Committee's role had increased following the initiation of the peace process should be enough to silence those who had predicted the decline of such role.

17. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee's delegation to the seminar would be composed of the Vice-Chairman, the Rapporteur, the Permanent Observer for Palestine and himself.

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18. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the provisional programme for the symposium contained in working paper No. 2, which had been prepared by the officers of the Committee in consultation with the North American Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine. He took it that the Committee wished to approve it.

19. It was so decided.

APPLICATIONS BY NEW NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR ACCREDITATION WITH THE COMMITTEE

20. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to working paper No. 3, on applications by new non-governmental organizations for accreditation with the Committee. All the organizations on the list had been recommended by the regional coordinating committees for accreditation with the Committee. Furthermore, all the requests had been screened by the officers. Approval of those applications would enable the non-governmental organizations concerned to participate in a more dynamic manner in the events organized by the Committee.

21. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the requests for accreditation contained in working paper No. 3.

22. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS

23. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that some of the important changes made to the Committee's traditional programme of work would enhance the Committee's work and enable it to make optimum use of available resources. He thanked the Government of Egypt for hosting the economic seminar which, he was confident, would achieve a number of positive results.

24. The recent visit by President Arafat to the United Nations reflected Palestine's firm commitment to the work of the United Nations and to enhancing

the Organization's role in the Middle East peace process. It also reflected the appreciation of Palestinians for the political stance taken by the United Nations in support of the Palestinian people. In April 1996, the Palestinian National Council had adopted a special resolution on the United Nations in which it had stressed that the Organization and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People should continue their work until all aspects of the Palestinian question were resolved. At the same time the Palestinian National Council had also eliminated those provisions of the Palestine National Charter which were contradictory to the contents of letters exchanged between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel in September 1993. Lastly, final status negotiations between the parties had begun on 5 May 1996 in Egypt.

25. Those positive steps by the Palestinian side had made it incumbent upon the Israeli side in turn to take several necessary steps. Such steps included: lifting the blockade on the Palestinian territories; refraining from violating the terms of the bilateral agreements including the imposition of collective punishment in violation of international humanitarian law; redeploying Israeli forces from Hebron; establishing a corridor between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip which would ensure contacts between the Palestinian territories; releasing all Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons; and pressing forward with the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Area B on the West Bank. Those steps would be consistent with Israel's undertakings, and would confirm its good faith and readiness to move forward with the peace process.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.